

Monotheism

Monotheism is the belief in one god.^{[1][2][3][4]} A narrower definition of monotheism is the belief in the existence of only one god that created the world, is omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient.^{[5][6][7]}

A distinction may be made between exclusive monotheism, and both inclusive monotheism and pluriform (panentheistic) monotheism which, while recognising various distinct gods, postulate some underlying unity.^[1]

Monotheism is distinguished from henotheism, a religious system in which the believer worships one god without denying that others may worship different gods with equal validity, and monolatry, the recognition of the existence of many gods but with the consistent worship of only one deity.^[8] The term *monolatry* was perhaps first used by Julius Wellhausen.^[9]

The broader definition of monotheism characterizes the traditions of Bábism, the Bahá'í Faith, Cao Dai (Caodaism), Cheondoism (Cheondogyo), Christianity,^[10] Deism, Druze faith,^[11] Eckankar, Sikhism, Hindu sects such as Shaivism and Vaishnavism, Islam, Judaism, Mandaeism, Rastafari, Seicho no Ie, Tenrikyo (Tenriism), Yazidism, and Zoroastrianism, and elements of pre-monotheistic thought are found in early religions such as Atenism, ancient Chinese religion, and Yahwism.^{[1][12]}

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Etymology

The word *monotheism* comes from the Greek μόνος (*monos*)^[13] meaning "single" and θεός (*theos*)^[14] meaning "god".^[15] The English term was first used by Henry More (1614–1687).^[16]

Origins

Quasi-monotheistic claims of the existence of a universal deity date to the Late Bronze Age, with Akhenaten's *Great Hymn to the Aten*. A possible inclination towards monotheism emerged during the Vedic period^[17] in Iron-Age South Asia. The Rigveda exhibits notions of monism of the Brahman, particularly in the comparatively late tenth book,^[18] which is dated to the early Iron Age, e.g. in the Nasadiya Sukta.

Since the sixth century BCE, Zoroastrians have believed in the supremacy of one God above all: Ahura Mazda as the "Maker of All"^[19] and the first being before all others.^{[20][21][22][23]} Nonetheless, Zoroastrianism was not strictly monotheistic^[24] because it venerated other *yazatas* alongside Ahura Mazda. Ancient Hindu theology, meanwhile, was monist, but was not strictly monotheistic in worship because it still maintained the existence of many gods, who were envisioned as aspects of one supreme God, Brahman.^[25]

Thales (followed by other Monists, such as Anaximander, Anaximenes, Heraclitus, Parmenides) proposed that nature can be explained by reference to a single unitary principle that pervades everything.^[26] Numerous ancient Greek philosophers, including Xenophanes of Colophon and Antisthenes believed in a similar polytheistic monism that bore some similarities to monotheism.^[25] The first known reference to a unitary God is Plato's Demiurge (divine Craftsman), followed by Aristotle's unmoved mover, both of which would profoundly influence Jewish and Christian theology.^[26] Post-exilic^[26] Judaism was the first religion to conceive the notion of a personal monotheistic God within a monist context.^[25] The concept of ethical monotheism, which holds that morality stems from God alone and that its laws are unchanging,^{[27][28]} first occurred in Judaism,^[29] but is now a core tenet of most modern monotheistic religions, including Zoroastrianism, Christianity, Islam, Sikhism, and Bahá'í Faith.^[30]

According to Jewish, Christian and Islamic tradition, monotheism was the original religion of humanity; this original religion is sometimes referred to as "the Adamic religion", or, in the terms of Andrew Lang, the "Urreligion". Scholars of religion largely abandoned that view in the 19th century in favour of an evolutionary progression from animism via polytheism to monotheism, but by 1974 this theory was less widely held, and a modified view similar to Lang's became more prominent.^[6] Austrian anthropologist Wilhelm Schmidt had postulated an *Urmonotheismus*, "original" or "primitive monotheism" in the 1910s.^[31] It was objected that

Judaism, Christianity, and Islam had grown up in opposition to polytheism as had Greek philosophical monotheism.^[6] More recently, Karen Armstrong^[32] and other authors have returned to the idea of an evolutionary progression beginning with animism, which developed into polytheism, which developed into henotheism, which developed into monolatry, which developed into true monotheism.^[33]

Abrahamic religions

While all adherents of the Abrahamic religions consider themselves to be monotheists, some in Judaism do not consider Christianity to be a pure form of monotheism (due to the Christian doctrine of the Trinity), classifying it as *shituf*.^{[34][35]} Islam likewise does not recognize modern-day Christianity as monotheistic, primarily due to the Christian doctrine of Trinity, which Islam categorizes as *shirk* and argues was a corruption of the beliefs actually held by Jesus.^[36] Christians, on the other hand, argue that the doctrine of the Trinity is a valid expression of monotheism, citing that the Trinity does not consist of three separate deities, but rather the three persons, who exist consubstantially (as one substance) within a single Godhead.^{[37][38][39]}

Judaism

Judaism is traditionally considered one of the oldest monotheistic religions in the world,^[40] although it is believed that the earliest Israelites (pre-7th century BCE) were polytheistic,^[41] who evolved into henotheistic and later monolatristic,^[42] rather than monotheistic. God in Second Temple Judaism later Rabbinic Judaism was strictly monotheistic,^[43] an absolute one, indivisible, and incomparable being who is the ultimate cause of all existence. The Babylonian Talmud references other, "foreign gods" as non-existent entities to whom humans mistakenly ascribe reality and power.^[44] One of the best-known statements of Rabbinic Judaism on monotheism is the Second of Maimonides' 13 Principles of faith:

God, the Cause of all, is one. This does not mean one as in one of a pair, nor one like a species (which encompasses many individuals), nor one as in an object that is made up of many elements, nor as a single simple object that is infinitely divisible. Rather, God is a unity unlike any other possible unity.^[45]



The image shows three versions of the tetragrammaton (YHWH) in different scripts. The top version is in Paleo-Hebrew (10th century BCE to 135 CE), the middle version is in old Aramaic (10th century BCE to 4th century CE), and the bottom version is in square Hebrew (3rd century BCE to present).

The tetragrammaton in Paleo-Hebrew (10th century BCE to 135 CE), old Aramaic (10th century BCE to 4th century CE), and square Hebrew (3rd century BCE to present) scripts.

Some in Judaism^[46] and Islam reject the Christian idea of monotheism. Judaism uses the term *shituf* to refer to the worship of God in a manner which Judaism deems to be neither purely monotheistic (though still permissible for non-Jews) nor polytheistic (which would be prohibited).^[35]

In Ancient Israel

During the 8th century BCE, the worship of Yahweh in Israel was in competition with many other cults, described by the Yahwist faction collectively as Baals. The oldest books of the Hebrew Bible reflect this competition, as in the books of Hosea and Nahum, whose authors lament the "apostasy" of the people of Israel, threatening them with the wrath of God if they do not give up their polytheistic cults.^{[47][48]}

Ancient Israelite religion was originally polytheistic;^[41] the Israelites worshipped many deities,^[49] including El, Baal, Asherah, and Astarte. Yahweh was originally the national god of the Kingdom of Israel and the Kingdom of Judah.^[49] As time progressed, the henotheistic cult of Yahweh grew increasingly militant in its opposition to the worship of other gods.^[41] Later, the reforms of King Josiah imposed a form of strict

monolatry. After the fall of Judah and the beginning of the Babylonian captivity, a small circle of priests and scribes gathered around the exiled royal court, where they first developed the concept of Yahweh as the sole God of the world.^[25]

The Shema

Shema Yisrael ("Hear, [O] Israel") are the first two words of a section of the Torah, and is the title of a prayer that serves as a centerpiece of the morning and evening Jewish prayer services. The first verse encapsulates the monotheistic essence of Judaism: "Hear, O Israel: the LORD our God, the LORD is one" (Hebrew: שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ ה' אֶחָד), found in Deuteronomy 6,^[50] sometimes alternatively translated as "The LORD is our God, the LORD alone". Observant Jews consider the Shema to be the most important part of the prayer service in Judaism, and its twice-daily recitation as a *mitzvah* (religious commandment). It is traditional for Jews to say the Shema as their last words, and for parents to teach their children to say it before they go to sleep at night.

Christianity

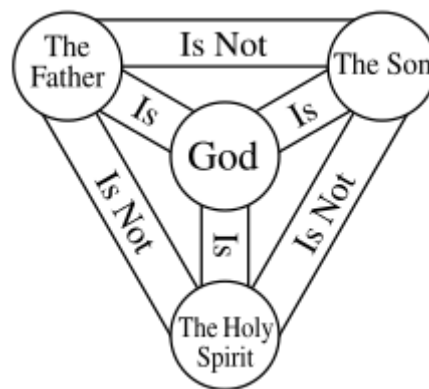
Among early Christians there was considerable debate over the nature of the Godhead, with some denying the incarnation but not the deity of Jesus (Docetism) and others later calling for an Arian conception of God. Despite at least one earlier local synod rejecting the claim of Arius, this Christological issue was to be one of the items addressed at the First Council of Nicaea.

The First Council of Nicaea, held in Nicaea (in present-day Turkey), convoked by the Roman Emperor Constantine I in 325, was the first ecumenical^[52] council of bishops of the Roman Empire, and most significantly resulted in the first uniform Christian doctrine, called the Nicene Creed. With the creation of the creed, a precedent was established for subsequent general ecumenical councils of bishops (synods) to create statements of belief and canons of doctrinal orthodoxy— the intent being to define a common creed for the Church and address heretical ideas.

One purpose of the council was to resolve disagreements in Alexandria over the nature of Jesus in relationship to the Father; in particular, whether Jesus was of the same substance as God the Father or merely of similar substance. All but two bishops took the first position; while Arius' argument failed.

Christian orthodox traditions (Eastern Orthodox, Oriental Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and most Protestants) follow this decision, which was reaffirmed in 381 at the First Council of Constantinople and reached its full development through the work of the Cappadocian Fathers. They consider God to be a triune entity, called the Trinity, comprising three "persons", God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. These three are described as being "of the same substance" (ὁμοούσιος).

Christians overwhelmingly assert that monotheism is central to the Christian faith, as the Nicene Creed (and others), which gives the orthodox Christian definition of the Trinity, begins: "I believe in one God". From earlier than the times of the Nicene Creed, 325 CE, various Christian figures advocated^[53] the triune mystery-nature of God as a normative profession of faith. According to Roger E. Olson and Christopher Hall, through prayer, meditation, study and practice, the Christian community concluded "that God must exist as both a unity and trinity", codifying this in ecumenical council at the end of the 4th century.^[54]

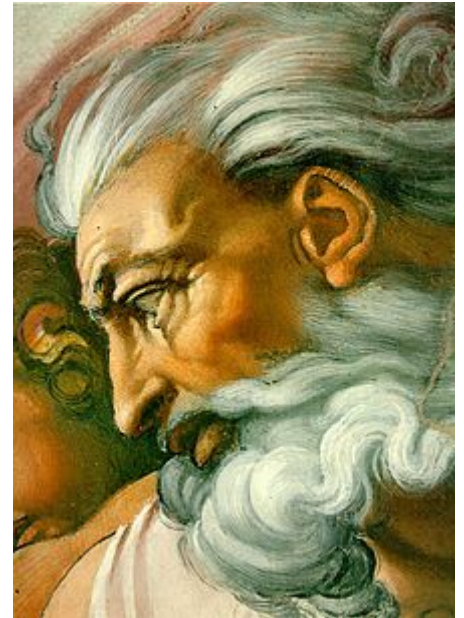


The Trinity is the belief in Christianity that God is one God in essence but three persons: God the Father, God the Son (Jesus), and God the Holy Spirit.^[51]

Most modern Christians believe the Godhead is triune, meaning that the three persons of the Trinity are in one union in which each person is also wholly God. They also hold to the doctrine of a man-god Christ Jesus as God incarnate. These Christians also do not believe that one of the three divine figures is God alone and the other two are not but that all three are mysteriously God and one. Other Christian religions, including Unitarian Universalism, Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormonism and others, do not share those views on the Trinity.

Some Christian faiths, such as Mormonism, argue that the Godhead is in fact three separate individuals which include God the Father, His Son Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost.^[55] Each individual having a distinct purpose in the grand existence of human kind.^[56] Furthermore, Mormons believe that before the Council of Nicaea, the predominant belief among many early Christians was that the Godhead was three separate individuals. In support of this view, they cite early Christian examples of belief in subordinationism.^[57]

Unitarianism is a theological movement, named for its understanding of God as one person, in direct contrast to Trinitarianism.^[58]



God in The Creation of Adam, fresco by Michelangelo (c. 1508-1512)

Islam

In Islam, God (Allāh) is all-powerful and all-knowing, the creator, sustainer, ordainer and judge of the universe.^{[59][60]} God in Islam is strictly singular (tawhid)^[61] unique (wahid) and inherently One (ahad), all-merciful and omnipotent.^[62] Allāh exists without place^[63] and the Quran states that "No vision can grasp Him, but His grasp is over all vision. God is above all comprehension, yet is acquainted with all things" (Quran 6:103)^[60] Allāh is the only God and the same God worshiped in Christianity and Judaism. (29:46 (<https://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A2002.02.0006%3Asura%3D29%3Averse%3D46>)).^[64]

Islam emerged in the 7th century CE in the context of both Christianity and Judaism, with some thematic elements similar to Gnosticism.^{[65][66][67][68][69][70][71][72]} Islamic belief states that Muhammad did not bring a new religion from God, but rather the same religion as practiced by Abraham, Moses, David, Jesus and all the other prophets of God.^[73] The assertion of Islam is that the message of God had been corrupted, distorted or lost over time and the Quran was sent to Muhammad in order to correct the lost message of the Tawrat (Torah), Injil (Gospel) and Zabur.^[74]

The Quran asserts the existence of a single and absolute truth that transcends the world; a unique and indivisible being who is independent of the creation.^[75] The Quran rejects binary modes of thinking such as the idea of a duality of God by arguing that both good and evil generate from God's creative act. God is a universal god rather than a local, tribal or parochial one; an absolute who integrates all affirmative values and brooks no evil.^[76] Ash'ari theology, which dominated Sunni Islam from the tenth to the nineteenth century, insists on ultimate divine transcendence and holds that divine unity is not accessible to human reason. Ash'arism teaches that human knowledge regarding it is limited to what has been revealed through the prophets, and on such paradoxes as God's creation of evil, revelation had to accept *bila kayfa* (without [asking] how).^[77]



Arabic calligraphy reading "Allah, may his glory be glorified"

Tawhid constitutes the foremost article of the Muslim profession of faith, "There is no god but God, Muhammad is the messenger of God."^[78] To attribute divinity to a created entity is the only unpardonable sin mentioned in the Quran.^[76] The entirety of the Islamic teaching rests on the principle of *tawhid*.^[79]

Medieval Islamic philosopher Al-Ghazali offered a proof of monotheism from omnipotence, asserting there can only be one omnipotent being. For if there were two omnipotent beings, the first would either have power over the second (meaning the second is not omnipotent) or not (meaning the first is not omnipotent); thus implying that there could only be one omnipotent being.^[80]

As they traditionally profess a concept of monotheism with a singular entity as God, Judaism^[46] and Islam reject the Christian idea of monotheism. Judaism uses the term Shituf to refer to non-monotheistic ways of worshiping God. Although Muslims venerate Jesus (Isa in Arabic) as a prophet, they do not accept the doctrine that he was a begotten son of God.

Mandaeism

Mandaeism or Mandaeanism (Arabic: مندائية *Mandā'īyah*) is a monotheistic Gnostic religion.^{[81]:4} Its adherents, the Mandaeans, revere Adam, Abel, Seth, Enos, Noah, Shem, Aram, and especially John the Baptist. The Mandaean God is named as *Hayyi Rabbi* meaning The Great Life or The Great Living God. The Mandaeans are Semites and speak a dialect of Eastern Aramaic known as Mandaic. The name 'Mandaean' is said to come from the Aramaic *manda* meaning "knowledge", as does Greek *gnosis*.^{[82][83]} Within the Middle East, but outside of their community, the Mandaeans are more commonly known as the *Ṣubba* (singular: *Ṣubbī*) or Sabians. The term *Ṣubba* is derived from the Aramaic root related to baptism, the neo-Mandaic is *Ṣabi*.^[84] In Islam, the "Sabians" (Arabic: الصابئون *al-Ṣābi'ūn*) are described several times in the Quran as People of the Book, alongside Jews and Christians.^[85]



Mandaean pendant

Bahá'í Faith

God in the Bahá'í Faith is taught to be the Imperishable, uncreated Being Who is the source of existence, too great for humans to fully comprehend. Human primitive understanding of God is achieved through his revelations via his divine intermediary Manifestations.^{[86][87]} In the Bahá'í faith, such Christian doctrines as the Trinity are seen as compromising the Bahá'í view that God is single and has no equal.^[88] And the very existence of the Bahá'í Faith is a challenge to the Islamic doctrine of the finality of Muhammad's revelation.^[89]



Bahá'í House of Worship,
Langenhain, Germany

God in the Bahá'í Faith communicates to humanity through divine intermediaries, known as Manifestations of God.^[90] These Manifestations establish religion in the world.^[87] It is through these divine intermediaries that humans can approach God, and through them God brings divine revelation and law.^[91]

The Oneness of God is one of the core teachings of the Bahá'í Faith. The obligatory prayers in the Bahá'í Faith involve explicit monotheistic testimony.^{[92][93]} God is the imperishable, uncreated being who is the source of all existence.^[94] He is described as "a personal God, unknowable, inaccessible, the source of all Revelation, eternal, omniscient, omnipresent and almighty".^{[95][96]} Although transcendent and inaccessible directly, his image is reflected in his creation. The purpose of creation is for the created to have the capacity to know and love its creator.^[97] God communicates his will and purpose to humanity through intermediaries, known as Manifestations of God, who are the prophets and messengers that have founded religions from prehistoric times up to the present day.^[90]

Rastafari

Rastafari, sometimes termed Rastafarianism, is classified as both a new religious movement and social movement. It developed in Jamaica during the 1930s. It lacks any centralised authority and there is much heterogeneity among practitioners, who are known as Rastafari, Rastafarians, or Rastas.

Rastafari refer to their beliefs, which are based on a specific interpretation of the Bible, as "Rastalogy". Central is a monotheistic belief in a single God—referred to as Jah—who partially resides within each individual. The former emperor of Ethiopia, Haile Selassie, is given central importance. Many Rastas regard him as an incarnation of Jah on Earth and as the Second Coming of Christ. Others regard him as a human prophet who fully recognised the inner divinity within every individual.

Atenism

Amenhotep IV initially introduced Atenism in Year 5 of his reign (1348/1346 BCE) during the 18th dynasty of the New Kingdom. He raised Aten, once a relatively obscure Egyptian solar deity representing the disk of the sun, to the status of Supreme God in the Egyptian pantheon.^[98] To emphasise the change, Aten's name was written in the cartouche form normally reserved for Pharaohs, an innovation of Atenism. This religious reformation appears to coincide with the proclamation of a Sed festival, a sort of royal jubilee intended to reinforce the Pharaoh's divine powers of kingship. Traditionally held in the thirtieth year of the Pharaoh's reign, this possibly was a festival in honour of Amenhotep III, who some Egyptologists think had a coregency with his son Amenhotep IV of two to twelve years.

Year 5 is believed to mark the beginning of Amenhotep IV's construction of a new capital, Akhetaten (*Horizon of the Aten*), at the site known today as Amarna.^[99] Evidence of this appears on three of the boundary stelae used to mark the boundaries of this new capital. At this time, Amenhotep IV officially changed his name to Akhenaten (*Agreeable to Aten*) as evidence of his new worship. The date given for the event has been estimated to fall around January 2 of that year. In Year 7 of his reign (1346/1344 BCE), the capital was moved from Thebes to Akhetaten (near modern Amarna), though construction of the city seems to have continued for two more years. In shifting his court from the traditional ceremonial centres Akhenaten was signalling a dramatic transformation in the focus of religious and political power.



Pharaoh Akhenaten and his family adoring the Aten.

The move separated the Pharaoh and his court from the influence of the priesthood and from the traditional centres of worship, but his decree had deeper religious significance too—taken in conjunction with his name change, it is possible that the move to Amarna was also meant as a signal of Akhenaten's symbolic death and rebirth. It may also have coincided with the death of his father and the end of the coregency. In addition to constructing a new capital in honor of Aten, Akhenaten also oversaw the construction of some of the most massive temple complexes in ancient Egypt, including one at Karnak and one at Thebes, close to the old temple of Amun.

In Year 9 (1344/1342 BCE), Akhenaten declared a more radical version of his new religion, declaring Aten not merely the supreme god of the Egyptian pantheon, but the only God of Egypt, with himself as the sole intermediary between the Aten and the Egyptian people. Key features of Atenism included a ban on idols and other images of the Aten, with the exception of a rayed solar disc, in which the rays (commonly depicted ending in hands) appear to represent the unseen spirit of Aten. Akhenaten made it however clear that the image of the Aten only represented the god, but that the god transcended creation and so could not be fully understood or represented.^[100] Aten was addressed by Akhenaten in prayers, such as the *Great Hymn to the Aten*: "O Sole God beside whom there is none".

The details of Atenist theology are still unclear. The exclusion of all but one god and the prohibition of idols was a radical departure from Egyptian tradition, but scholars see Akhenaten as a practitioner of monolatry rather than monotheism, as he did not actively deny the existence of other gods; he simply refrained from worshipping any but Aten. Akhenaten associated Aten with Ra and put forward the eminence of Aten as the renewal of the kingship of Ra.^[101]

Under Akhenaten's successors, Egypt reverted to its traditional religion, and Akhenaten himself came to be reviled as a heretic.

Aboriginal Australian Religions

Aboriginal Australians are typically described as polytheistic in nature.^[102] Although some researchers shy from referring to Dreamtime figures as "gods" or "deities", they are broadly described as such for the sake of simplicity.^[103]

In Southeastern Australian cultures, the sky father Baiame is perceived as the creator of the universe (though this role is sometimes taken by other gods like Yhi or Bunjil) and at least among the Gamilaraay traditionally revered above other mythical figures.^[104] Equation between him and the Christian god is common among both missionaries and modern Christian Aboriginals.^[105]

The Yolngu had extensive contact with the Makassans and adopted religious practises inspired by those of Islam. The god Walitha'walitha is based on Allah (specifically, with the *wa-Ta'ala* suffix), but while this deity had a role in funerary practises it is unclear if it was "Allah-like" in terms of functions.^[106]

Andaman Islands

The religion of the Andamanese peoples has at times been described as "animistic monotheism", believing foremost in a single deity, Paluga, who created the universe.^[107] However, Paluga is not worshipped, and anthropomorphic personifications of natural phenomena are also known.^[108]

Chinese religions

The orthodox faith system held by most dynasties of China since at least the Shang Dynasty (1766 BCE) until the modern period centered on the worship of Shangdi (literally "Above Sovereign", generally translated as "God") or Heaven as an omnipotent force.^[109] This faith system pre-dated the development of Confucianism and Taoism and the introduction of Buddhism and Christianity. It has features of monotheism in that Heaven is seen as an omnipotent entity, a noncorporeal force with a personality transcending the world. From the writings of Confucius in the *Analects*, it is known Confucius believed that Heaven cannot be deceived, Heaven guides people's lives and maintains a personal relationship with them, and that Heaven gives tasks for people to fulfill in order to teach them of virtues and morality.^[109] However, this faith system was not truly monotheistic since other lesser gods and spirits, which varied with locality, were also worshiped along with Shangdi. Still, later variants such as Mohism (470 BCE–c.391 BCE) approached true monotheism, teaching that the function of lesser gods and ancestral spirits is merely to carry out the will of Shangdi, akin to the angels in Abrahamic religions which in turn counts as only one god. In Mozi's Will of Heaven (天志), he writes:



Shang Dynasty bronze script character for *tian* (天), which translates to Heaven and sky.

I know Heaven loves men dearly not without reason. Heaven ordered the sun, the moon, and the stars to enlighten and guide them. Heaven ordained the four seasons, Spring, Autumn, Winter, and Summer, to regulate them. Heaven sent down snow, frost, rain, and dew to grow the five grains and flax and silk that so the people could use and enjoy them. Heaven established the hills and rivers, ravines and valleys, and arranged many things to minister to man's good or bring him evil. He appointed the dukes and lords to reward the virtuous and punish the wicked, and to gather metal and wood, birds and beasts, and to engage in cultivating the five grains and flax and silk to provide for the people's food and clothing. This has been so from antiquity to the present.

且吾所以知天之愛民之厚者有矣，曰以磨為日月星辰，以昭道之；制為四時春秋冬夏，以紀綱之；雷降雪霜雨露，以長遂五穀麻絲，使民得而財利之；列為山川谿谷，播賦百事，以臨司民之善否；為王公侯伯，使之賞賢而罰暴；賦金木鳥獸，從事乎五穀麻絲，以為民衣食之財。自古及今，未嘗不有此也。

— *Will of Heaven*, Chapter 27, Paragraph 6, ca. 5th century BCE

Worship of Shangdi and Heaven in ancient China includes the erection of shrines, the last and greatest being the Temple of Heaven in Beijing, and the offering of prayers. The ruler of China in every Chinese dynasty would perform annual sacrificial rituals to Shangdi, usually by slaughtering a completely healthy bull as sacrifice. Although its popularity gradually diminished after the advent of Taoism and Buddhism, among other religions, its concepts remained in use throughout the pre-modern period and have been incorporated in later religions in China, including terminology used by early Christians in China. Despite the rising of non-theistic and pantheistic spirituality contributed by Taoism and Buddhism, Shangdi was still praised up until the end of the Qing Dynasty as the last ruler of the Qing declared himself son of heaven.

Indigenous African religions

The Himba people of Namibia practice a form of monotheistic pantheism, and worship the god Mukuru. The deceased ancestors of the Himba and Herero are subservient to him, acting as intermediaries.^[110]

The Igbo people practice a form of monotheism called Odinani.^[111] Odinani has monotheistic and pantheistic attributes, having a single God as the source of all things. Although a pantheon of spirits exists, these are lesser spirits prevalent in Odinani expressly serving as elements of Chineke (or Chukwu), the

supreme being or high god.

Waaq is the name of a singular God in the traditional religion of many Cushitic people in the Horn of Africa, denoting an early monotheistic religion. However this religion was mostly replaced with the Abrahamic religions. Some (approximately 3%) of Oromo still follow this traditional monotheistic religion called Waaqeffannaa in Oromo.

Indo-European religions

Proto-Indo-European religion

The head deity of the Proto-Indo-European religion was the god **Dyḗus P_htḗr*. A number of words derived from the name of this prominent deity are used in various Indo-European languages to denote a monotheistic God. Nonetheless, in spite of this, Proto-Indo-European religion itself was not monotheistic.^[112]

In Eastern Europe, the ancient traditions of the Slavic religion contained elements of monotheism. In the sixth century AD, the Byzantine chronicler Procopius recorded that the Slavs "acknowledge that one god, creator of lightning, is the only lord of all: to him do they sacrifice an ox and all sacrificial animals."^[113] The deity to whom Procopius is referring is the storm god Perún, whose name is derived from **Perkʷunos*, the Proto-Indo-European god of lightning. The ancient Slavs syncretized him with the Germanic god Thor and the Biblical prophet Elijah.^[114]

Indo-Iranian religions

Hinduism

As an old religion, Hinduism inherits religious concepts spanning monotheism, polytheism, panentheism, pantheism, monism, and atheism among others;^{[115][116][117][118]} and its concept of God is complex and depends upon each individual and the tradition and philosophy followed.

Hindu views are broad and range from monism, through pantheism and panentheism (alternatively called monistic theism by some scholars) to monotheism and even atheism. Hinduism cannot be said to be purely polytheistic. Hindu religious leaders have repeatedly stressed that while God's forms are many and the ways to communicate with him are many, God is one. The *puja* of the *murti* is a way to communicate with the abstract one god (*Brahman*) which creates, sustains and dissolves creation.^[119]

Rig Veda 1.164.46,

*Indraṃ mitraṃ varuṇamagnimāhuratho divyaḥ sa suparṇo
gharutmān,
ekaṃ sad viprā bahudhā vadantyaghnim yamaṃ
mātariśvānamāhuḥ*

"They call him Indra, Mitra, Varuṇa, Agni, and he is heavenly nobly-winged Garuda.

To what is One, sages give many a title they call it Agni, Yama, Mātariśvan." (trans. Griffith)



Krishna displays his Vishvarupa (universal form) to Arjuna on the battlefield of Kurukshetra.

Traditions of Gaudiya Vaishnavas, the Nimbarka Sampradaya and followers of Swaminarayan and Vallabha consider Krishna to be the source of all avatars,^[120] and the source of Vishnu himself, or to be the same as Narayana. As such, he is therefore regarded as Svayam Bhagavan.^{[121][122][123]}

When Krishna is recognized to be Svayam Bhagavan, it can be understood that this is the belief of Gaudiya Vaishnavism,^[124] the Vallabha Sampradaya,^[125] and the Nimbarka Sampradaya, where Krishna is accepted to be the source of all other avatars, and the source of Vishnu himself. This belief is drawn primarily "from the famous statement of the Bhagavatam"^[126] (1.3.28).^[127] A viewpoint differing from this theological concept is the concept of Krishna as an avatar of Narayana or Vishnu. It should be however noted that although it is usual to speak of Vishnu as the source of the avatars, this is only one of the names of the God of Vaishnavism, who is also known as Narayana, Vasudeva and Krishna and behind each of those names there is a divine figure with attributed supremacy in Vaishnavism.^[128]

The Rig Veda discusses monotheistic thought, as do the Atharva Veda and Yajur Veda: "Devas are always looking to the supreme abode of Vishnu" (*tad viṣṇoḥ paramaṁ padaṁ sadā paśyanti sūrayaḥ* Rig Veda 1.22.20)

"The One Truth, sages know by many names" (Rig Veda 1.164.46)^[129]

"When at first the unborn sprung into being, He won His own dominion beyond which nothing higher has been in existence" (Atharva Veda 10.7.31)^[130]

"There is none to compare with Him. There is no parallel to Him, whose glory, verily, is great." (Yajur Veda 32.3)^[131]

The number of auspicious qualities of God are countless, with the following six qualities (*bhaga*) being the most important:

- *Jñāna* (omniscience), defined as the power to know about all beings simultaneously
- *Aishvarya* (sovereignty, derived from the word *Ishvara*), which consists in unchallenged rule over all
- *Shakti* (energy), or power, which is the capacity to make the impossible possible
- *Bala* (strength), which is the capacity to support everything by will and without any fatigue
- *Vīrya* (vigor), which indicates the power to retain immateriality as the supreme being in spite of being the material cause of mutable creations
- *Tejas* (splendor), which expresses His self-sufficiency and the capacity to overpower everything by His spiritual effulgence^[132]

In the Shaivite tradition, the Shri Rudram (Sanskrit श्री रुद्रम्), to which the Chamakam (चमकम्) is added by scriptural tradition, is a Hindu *stotra* dedicated to Rudra (an epithet of Shiva), taken from the Yajurveda (TS 4.5, 4.7).^{[133][134]} Shri Rudram is also known as *Sri Rudraprasna*, *Śatarudrīya*, and *Rudradhyaya*. The text is important in Vedanta where Shiva is equated to the Universal supreme God. The hymn is an early example of enumerating the names of a deity,^[135] a tradition developed extensively in the sahasranama literature of Hinduism.

The Nyaya school of Hinduism has made several arguments regarding a monotheistic view. The Naiyanikas have given an argument that such a god can only be one. In the Nyaya Kusumanjali, this is discussed against the proposition of the Mimamsa school that let us assume there were many demigods (*devas*) and sages (*rishis*) in the beginning, who wrote the Vedas and created the world. Nyaya says that:

[If they assume such] omniscient beings, those endowed with the various superhuman faculties of assuming infinitesimal size, and so on, and capable of creating everything, then we reply that the *law of parsimony* bids us assume only one such, namely Him, the adorable Lord. There can be no confidence in a non-eternal and non-omniscient being, and hence it follows that according to the system which rejects God, the tradition of the Veda is simultaneously overthrown; there is no other way open.

In other words, Nyaya says that the polytheist would have to give elaborate proofs for the existence and origin of his several celestial spirits, none of which would be logical, and that it is more logical to assume one eternal, omniscient god.^[136]

Zoroastrianism

Zoroastrianism combines cosmogonic dualism and eschatological monotheism which makes it unique among the religions of the world. Zoroastrianism proclaims an evolution through time from dualism to monotheism.^[137]

Zoroastrianism is a monotheistic religion,^[138] although Zoroastrianism is often regarded^[139] as dualistic, duotheistic or bitheistic, for its belief in the hypostasis of the ultimately good Ahura Mazda (*creative spirit*) and the ultimately evil Angra Mainyu (*destructive spirit*). Zoroastrianism was once one of the largest religions on Earth, as the official religion of the Persian Empire. By some scholars, the Zoroastrians ("Parsis" or "Zartoshtis") are credited with being some of the first monotheists and having had influence on other world religions. Gathered statistics estimates the number of adherents at between 100,000 and 200,000,^{[140][141]} with adherents living in many regions, including South Asia.



Faravahar (or Ferohar), one of the primary symbols of Zoroastrianism, believed to be the depiction of a Fravashi (guardian spirit)

Sikhism



Ik Onkār, a Sikh symbol representing "the One Supreme Reality"

Sikhi is a monotheistic^{[142][143]} and a revealed religion.^[144] God in Sikhi is called Akal Purakh (which means "the true immortal") or Vāhigurū the Primal being. However, other names like Ram, Allah etc. are also used to refer to the same god, who is shapeless, timeless, and sightless: nirañkār, akal, and alakh. Sikhi presents a unique perspective where God is present (sarav viāpak) in all of its creation and does not exist outside of its creation. God must be seen

from "the inward eye", or the "heart". Sikhs follow the Aad Guru Granth Sahib and are instructed to meditate on the Naam (Name of God - Vāhigurū) to progress towards enlightenment, as its rigorous application permits the existence of communication between God and human beings.^[145]

Sikhism is a monotheistic faith^{[146][147]} that arose in northern India during the 16th and 17th centuries. Sikhs believe in one, timeless, omnipresent, supreme creator. The opening verse of the Guru Granth Sahib, known as the Mul Mantra, signifies this:



A Sikh temple, known as Nanaksar Gurudwara, in Alberta, Canada.

Punjabi: ਴ੳ ਸਤਿ ਨਾਮੁ ਕਰਤਾ ਪੁਰਖੁ ਨਿਰਭਉ ਨਿਰਵੈਰੁ ਅਕਾਲ ਮੂਰਤਿ ਅਜੂਨੀ ਸੈਭੰ ਗੁਰ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ ॥

Transliteration: ikk ōankār sat(i)-nām(u) karatā purakh(u) nirabha'u niravair(u) akāla mūrat(i) ajūnī saibhan(g) gur(a) prasād(i).

One Universal creator God, The supreme Unchangeable Truth, The Creator of the Universe, Beyond Fear, Beyond Hatred, Beyond Death, Beyond Birth, Self-Existent, by Guru's Grace.

The word "ੴ" ("Ik ōaṅkār") has two components. The first is ੴ, the digit "1" in Gurmukhi signifying the singularity of the creator. Together the word means: "One Universal creator God".

It is often said that the 1430 pages of the Guru Granth Sahib are all expansions on the Mul Mantra. Although the Sikhs have many names for God, some derived from Islam and Hinduism, they all refer to the same Supreme Being.

The Sikh holy scriptures refer to the One God who pervades the whole of space and is the creator of all beings in the universe. The following quotation from the Guru Granth Sahib highlights this point:

"Chant, and meditate on the One God, who permeates and pervades the many beings of the whole Universe. God created it, and God spreads through it everywhere. Everywhere I look, I see God. The Perfect Lord is perfectly pervading and permeating the water, the land and the sky; there is no place without Him."

— Guru Granth Sahib, Page 782

However, there is a strong case for arguing that the Guru Granth Sahib teaches monism due to its non-dualistic tendencies:

Punjabi: ਸਹਸ ਪਦ ਬਿਮਲ ਨਨ ਏਕ ਪਦ ਗੰਧ ਬਿਨੁ ਸਹਸ ਤਵ ਗੰਧ ਇਵ ਚਲਤ ਮੋਹੀ ॥੨॥

"You have thousands of Lotus Feet, and yet You do not have even one foot. You have no nose, but you have thousands of noses. This Play of Yours entrances me."

— Guru Granth Sahib, Page 13

Sikhs believe that God has been given many names, but they all refer to the One God, VāhiGurū. Sikh holy scripture (Guru Granth Sahib) speaks to all faiths and Sikhs believe that members of other religions such as Islam, Hinduism and Christianity all worship the same God, and the names Allah, Rahim, Karim, Hari, Raam and Paarbrahm are, therefore, frequently mentioned in the Sikh holy scripture (Guru Granth Sahib) . God in Sikhism is most commonly referred to as Akal Purakh (which means "the true immortal") or Waheguru, the Primal Being.

Ancient Greek religion

Classical Greece

The surviving fragments of the poems of the classical Greek philosopher Xenophanes of Colophon suggest that he held views very similar to those of modern monotheists.^[148] His poems harshly criticize the traditional notion of anthropomorphic gods, commenting that "...if cattle and horses and lions had hands or could paint with their hands and create works such as men do,... [they] also would depict the gods' shapes and make their bodies of such a sort as the form they themselves have."^[149] Instead, Xenophanes declares that there is "...one god, greatest among gods and humans, like mortals neither in form nor in thought."^[150] Xenophanes's

theology appears to have been monist, but not truly monotheistic in the strictest sense.^[25] Although some later philosophers, such as Antisthenes, believed in doctrines similar to those expounded by Xenophanes, his ideas do not appear to have become widely popular.^[25]

Although Plato himself was a polytheist, in his writings, he often presents Socrates as speaking of "the god" in the singular form. He does, however, often speak of the gods in the plural form as well. The Euthyphro dilemma, for example, is formulated as "Is that which is holy loved by the gods because it is holy, or is it holy because it is loved by the gods?"^[151]

Hellenistic religion

The development of pure (philosophical) monotheism is a product of the Late Antiquity. During the 2nd to 3rd centuries, early Christianity was just one of several competing religious movements advocating monotheism.

"The One" (Τὸ ἓν) is a concept that is prominent in the writings of the Neoplatonists, especially those of the philosopher Plotinus.^[152] In the writings of Plotinus, "The One" is described as an inconceivable, transcendent, all-embodying, permanent, eternal, causative entity that permeates throughout all of existence.^[153]

A number of oracles of Apollo from Didyma and Clarus, the so-called "theological oracles", dated to the 2nd and 3rd century CE, proclaim that there is only one highest god, of whom the gods of polytheistic religions are mere manifestations or servants.^[154] 4th century CE Cyprus had, besides Christianity, an apparently monotheistic cult of Dionysus.^[155]

The Hypsistarians were a religious group who believed in a most high god, according to Greek documents. Later revisions of this Hellenic religion were adjusted towards monotheism as it gained consideration among a wider populace. The worship of Zeus as the head-god signaled a trend in the direction of monotheism, with less honour paid to the fragmented powers of the lesser gods.

Native American religion

Native American religions may be monotheistic, polytheistic, henotheistic, animistic, or some combination thereof. Cherokee religion, for example, is monotheist as well as pantheist.

The Great Spirit, called Wakan Tanka among the Sioux,^[156] and Gitche Manitou in Algonquian, is a conception of universal spiritual force, or supreme being prevalent among some Native American and First Nation cultures.^[157] According to Lakota activist Russell Means a better translation of Wakan Tanka is the Great Mystery.^[158]



Fictionalized portrait of Xenophanes from a 17th-century engraving



Remains of the Temple of Apollo at Delphi, Greece.

Some researchers have interpreted Aztec philosophy as fundamentally monotheistic or panentheistic. While the populace at large believed in a polytheistic pantheon, Aztec priests and nobles might have come to an interpretation of Teotl as a single universal force with many facets.^[159] There has been criticism to this idea, however, most notably that many assertions of this supposed monotheism might actually come from post-Conquistador bias, imposing an Antiquity pagan model unto the Aztec.^[160]

Tengrism

Tengrism or Tangrism (sometimes stylized as Tengriism), occasionally referred to as Tengrianism, is a modern term^[161] for a Central Asian religion characterized by features of shamanism, animism, totemism, both polytheism and monotheism,^{[162][163][164][165]} and ancestor worship. Historically, it was the prevailing religion of the Bulgars, Turks, Mongols, and Hungarians, as well as the Xiongnu and the Huns.^{[166][167]} It was the state religion of the six ancient Turkic states: Avar Khaganate, Old Great Bulgaria, First Bulgarian Empire, Göktürks Khaganate, Eastern Tourkia and Western Turkic Khaganate. In *Irk Bitig*, Tengri is mentioned as *Türük Tängri* (God of Turks).^[168] The term is perceived among Turkic peoples as a *national* religion.

In Chinese and Turco-Mongol traditions, the Supreme God is commonly referred to as the ruler of Heaven, or the Sky Lord granted with omnipotent powers, but it has largely diminished in those regions due to ancestor worship, Taoism's pantheistic views and Buddhism's rejection of a creator God. On some occasions in the mythology, the Sky Lord as identified as a male has been associated to mate with an Earth Mother, while some traditions kept the omnipotence of the Sky Lord unshared.

New religious movements

Various New religious movements, such as Rastafari, Cao Đài, Tenrikyo, Seicho no Ie and Cheondoism are monotheistic.

See also

- Criticism of monotheism
- Idolatry
- Intelligent design
- Panentheism
- Pantheism
- Post-monotheism
- Unmoved mover

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53. *Examples of ante-Nicene statements:*

Hence all the power of magic became dissolved; and every bond of wickedness was destroyed, men's ignorance was taken away, and the old kingdom abolished God Himself appearing in the form of a man, for the renewal of eternal life.

— St. Ignatius of Antioch in *Letter to the Ephesians*, ch.4, shorter version,
Roberts-Donaldson translation

We have also as a Physician the Lord our God Jesus the Christ the only-begotten Son and Word, before time began, but who afterwards became also man, of Mary the virgin. For 'the Word was made flesh.' Being incorporeal, He was in the body; being impassible, He was in a passable body; being immortal, He was in a mortal body; being life, He became subject to corruption, that He might free our souls from death and corruption, and heal them, and might restore them to health, when they were diseased with ungodliness and wicked lusts

— St. Ignatius of Antioch in *Letter to the Ephesians*, ch.7, shorter version,
Roberts-Donaldson translation

The Church, though dispersed throughout the whole world, even to the ends of the earth, has received from the apostles and their disciples this faith: ...one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are in them; and in one Christ Jesus, the Son of God, who became incarnate for our salvation; and in the Holy Spirit, who proclaimed through the prophets the dispensations of God, and the advents, and the birth from a virgin, and the passion, and the resurrection from the dead, and the ascension into heaven in the flesh of the beloved Christ Jesus, our Lord, and His manifestation from heaven in the glory of the Father 'to gather all things in one,' and to raise up anew all flesh of the whole human race, in order that to Christ Jesus, our Lord, and God, and Savior, and King, according to the will of the invisible Father, 'every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess; to him, and that He should execute just judgment towards all...'

— St. Irenaeus in *Against Heresies*, ch.X, v.I, Donaldson, Sir James (1950),
Ante Nicene Fathers, Volume 1: Apostolic Fathers, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus,
William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., [ISBN 978-0802880871](https://www.eerdmans.com/9780802880871/ant-nicene-fathers-volume-1)

For, in the name of God, the Father and Lord of the universe, and of our Savior Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit, they then receive the washing with water

— Justin Martyr in *First Apology*, ch. LXI, Donaldson, Sir James (1950), *Ante Nicene Fathers, Volume 1: Apostolic Fathers, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus*, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, [ISBN 978-0802880871](https://www.eerdmans.com/9780802880871/ant-nicene-fathers-volume-1)

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61. The spelling *Tengrism* is found in the 1960s, e.g. Bergounioux (ed.), *Primitive and prehistoric religions*, Volume 140, Hawthorn Books, 1966, p. 80. *Tengrianism* is a reflection of the Russian term, Тенгрианство. It is reported in 1996 ("so-called Tengrianism") in Shnirel'man (ed.), *Who gets the past?: competition for ancestors among non-Russian intellectuals in Russia*, Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1996, ISBN 978-0-8018-5221-3, p. 31 (<https://books.google.com/books?id=4iwHp8asmsdEC&pg=PA31>) in the context of the nationalist rivalry over *Bulgar legacy*. The spellings *Tengriism* and *Tengrianity* are later, reported (deprecatingly, in scare quotes) in 2004 in *Central Asiatic journal*, vol. 48-49 (2004), p. 238 (<https://books.google.com/books?id=GeRVA AAAYAAJ&q=Tengriism&dq=Tengriism>). The Turkish term *Tengricilik* is also found from the 1990s. Mongolian Тэнгэр шүтлэг is used in a 1999 biography of *Genghis Khan* (Boldbaatar et. al, Чингис хаан, 1162-1227, Хаадын сан, 1999, p. 18 (https://books.google.com/books?id=OM IMAQAAMAAJ&q=%22%D0%A2%D1%8D%D0%BD%D0%B3%D1%8D%D1%80+%D1%88%D2%AF%D1%82%D0%BB%D1%8D%D0%B3%22&dq=%22%D0%A2%D1%8D%D0%BD%D0%B3%D1%8D%D1%80+%D1%88%D2%AF%D1%82%D0%BB%D1%8D%D0%B3%22&hl=en&sa=X&ei=HVBLT4yGBImhOtPRtf8N&redir_esc=y)).
62. R. Meserve, *Religions in the central Asian environment*. In: *History of Civilizations of Central Asia, Volume IV* (<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0012/001204/120455e.pdf>), The age of achievement: A.D. 750 to the end of the fifteenth century, Part Two: The achievements, p. 68:
- "[...] *The 'imperial' religion was more monotheistic, centred around the all-powerful god Tengri, the sky god.*"
63. Michael Fergus, Janar Jandosova, *Kazakhstan: Coming of Age* (<https://books.google.com/books?id=jAu9ttUqiJoC>), Stacey International, 2003, p.91:
- "[...] *a profound combination of monotheism and polytheism that has come to be known as Tengrism.*"
64. H. B. Paksoy, *Tengri in Eurasia* (<http://historicaltextarchive.com/sections.php?action=read&artid=783>) Archived (<https://web.archive.org/web/20170911134633/http://historicaltextarchive.com/sections.php?action=read&artid=783>) 2017-09-11 at the Wayback Machine, 2008

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66. "There is no doubt that between the 6th and 9th centuries Tengrism was the religion among the nomads of the steppes" Yazar András Róna-Tas, *Hungarians and Europe in the early Middle Ages: an introduction to early Hungarian history*, Yayıncı Central European University Press, 1999, ISBN 978-963-9116-48-1, p. 151 (https://books.google.com/books?id=I-RTt0Q6AcYC&pg=PA151&dq=hungarians+tengrism&hl=tr&ei=5dfbTfyDNsSUswbrr43wDg&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCsQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false).
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Further reading

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- William G. Dever, *Did God Have a Wife?: Archaeology and Folk Religion in Ancient Israel*, Eerdmans, 2005, ISBN 978-0802828521.
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- About.com "What is Monolatry?" (<https://web.archive.org/web/20130211205636/http://atheism.about.com/od/theismtheists/a/Monolatry-Monotheism-Gods.htm>) (Contains useful comparisons with henoteism etc.)
- Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/monotheism/>)
- Christian Monotheism (biblical unitarians) (<http://www.christianmonotheism.com/>)
- Deism (<http://www.deism.com/>)

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